

Wildlife Recording

Local and National Biological Recording Schemes

One way of encouraging the local community to engage in activities which benefit local biodiversity is to encourage Parishioners to take part in citizen science projects, either at local or national level.

Some of the projects, such as the [Big Garden Birdwatch](#), are undertaken once a year, whereas others, such as [The UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme](#), take place over a number of weeks in the year. There are also many ongoing projects and recording schemes. There are similar schemes – annual or frequent – for many different species, and the NBN ([National Biodiversity Network](#)) has a useful [list of wildlife surveys and recording schemes](#) in which you can participate.

Some recording schemes are useful for identifying and recording the less difficult or more common species, and provide a wealth of identification resources and advice. Other schemes, including some specialist national recording schemes, cover groups of species that cannot be identified without expert knowledge of the subject, for instance, certain groups of insects and plants.

Undertaking the survey and mapping the results

The [Parish Wildlife Map Toolkit](#) is an excellent guide to compiling a Parish wildlife map, but the guidance is also a helpful introduction to participating in numerous wildlife surveys, either formal or casual. The National Biodiversity Network also provides [a useful guide to getting involved in surveys and recording](#).

If you need help with identifying species, local resources such as [NatureSpot](#), which accepts wildlife sightings in Leicestershire and Rutland, is a good place to start. NatureSpot has excellent photos and descriptions of many common and uncommon species found in the two counties, and a range of very helpful resources and links.

Records submitted to NatureSpot will automatically appear on [iRecord](#), a national scheme for recording wildlife species; records are collated and checked by experts and made available to support research and decision-making at local and national levels. iRecord is run by the BRC (Biological Records Centre), a national organisation that works closely with the voluntary recording community, principally through support of national recording schemes and societies.

Records can be submitted to NatureSpot or directly to iRecord, or both schemes, as any duplicate records will be periodically deleted. One of the main benefits of using iRecord is that records can be viewed by experts who specialise in particular species groups; they are sometimes also able to provide expert advice on identification and give further guidance. A record entered onto iRecord may also be accessed by the relevant National Recording Scheme, with the data being made available to scientists and policymakers at a national level.

Other schemes include [iSpot](#), developed and hosted by the Open University. It is an online community for connecting nature enthusiasts, so although it is a good resource to help with identification, it is best to check an identification using another authoritative resource, such as NatureSpot or iRecord, for instance.

Many habitats are on private land so you should, of course, obtain permission from the landowner before carrying out a survey or recording session there.

Wildlife Recording in Leicestershire and Rutland

Every county has a biological records centre which is run by different organisations. In Leicestershire and Rutland, this is based at County Hall and is called Leicestershire and Rutland Environment Records Centre, or LRERC.

LRERC holds the biological records for most boroughs and districts of the two counties, with the exception of Charnwood Borough and Leicester city, which hold their own records but also periodically share records with the County database.

There are also local Vice County Recorders or Vice County Co-ordinators who collate records for specific species groups or 'taxa'. A Vice County is a geographical division of the British Isles used for the purpose of biological or scientific data-gathering, and Leicestershire and Rutland is Vice County 55, often shortened to VC55.

County Recorders or Co-ordinators are normally individuals with links to national recording schemes and have a data-sharing agreement with the local records office. In addition, NatureSpot and Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust have a data-sharing agreement with LRERC.

If there is interest in a particular group of species, for example vascular plants, birds, moths or bats, there are also local interest groups with which Parishes or individuals could become involved. These include the Leicestershire Entomological Society, Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group, Leicestershire Moth Recorders and Leicestershire and Rutland Badger Group.

For those new to biological recording, NatureSpot is a great place to start, particularly for the species which are fairly straightforward to identify. County Recorders or Co-ordinators may be able to give advice on some of the species which are more difficult to identify.

An annual magazine, Leicestershire and Rutland Recorder, is produced and published annually. It is the journal of the Leicestershire and Rutland Recorders' Network which is an informal association of naturalists who record our local flora and fauna. It shares information about biological records in VC55 (Leicestershire and Rutland), to support local naturalists and to encourage newcomers to participate in biological recording. Each issue of Recorder contains the contact details of County Recorders and Co-ordinators, and there is also a contact list on the NatureSpot website.

There is usually an annual Recorders' Conference which is co-ordinated by LRWT and held in February or March. This brings together amateur recorders in Leicestershire and Rutland and local experts. There are talks and presentations and it's also an excellent opportunity to make contact with others who share an interest in particular species groups, such as wildflowers, trees, birds, moths, bees or bats.

It should be noted that a casual recording session involving inexperienced volunteers may not have the same authority as a formal survey undertaken by a recognised specialist in a particular field. It can therefore be useful to invite someone with appropriate identification skills and experience to take part in any citizen science project such as local 'bioblitz' sessions. The presence of a local expert, or at least someone with enough experience to help focus participants' efforts, can bring added value to the community learning experience, and they can also give advice on the best way to make each record count.

Further information

- **NatureSpot** - Recording the wildlife of Leicestershire & Rutland
<https://www.naturespot.org.uk/>
- **Leicestershire and Rutland Environment Records Centre (LRERC)**
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/leicestershire-and-rutland-environment-records-centre-lrerc>
- **iRecord**
<https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/>
- **NBN (National Biodiversity Network)**

List of wildlife surveys and recording schemes
<https://nbn.org.uk/tools-and-resources/useful-websites/database-of-wildlife-surveys-and-recording-schemes/>

Record, share and explore data
<https://nbn.org.uk/record-share-explore-data>

Guides to surveys
<https://nbn.org.uk/tools-and-resources/publications/guidance-documents/>
- **Parish Wildlife Map Toolkit**
www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/uploads/File_Management/Publications/Planning/Parish_Wildlife_Toolkit_WEBv2.pdf
- **RSPB - Big Garden Birdwatch**
www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch
- **UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme**
www.ukbms.org
- **Garden Moth Scheme**
<http://www.gardenmoths.org.uk/>
- **National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme**
<http://www.narrs.org.uk/#:~:text=The%20NARRS%20scheme%20brings%20existing,species%20are%20in%20national%20decline.>
- **iSpot**
www.ispotnature.org